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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by International Federation for Peace and Sustainable Development (IFPSD), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-18986 (E) 121118

Please recycle

Statement

In accordance with the Council Resolution 1996/31 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development set forth by the United Nations, decent work and economic growth, including but not limited to providing productive and inclusive employment is imperative. One of the targets of the SDGs is to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (SDG 8.6.).

In our research at The International Federation for Peace and Sustainable Development, we found that as of 2018 youth are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. The International Federation for Peace and Sustainable Development is recommending the following statement in address to the Commission:

Challenges young graduates face in the workplace right out of university

- Member states of the United Nations should reserve at least 10 per cent of all jobs in the public and private sectors for the graduates of the new generation as they are the minds of the future.
- The new generation of employees will be an asset to both the public and private sector due to their intrinsic knowledge of modern technology and its large role in society.
- Graduates of higher education should be accepted as having the prerequisite experience due to their extensive studies in their respective field of study in order to avoid the vicious cycle wherein recent graduates looking to gain work experience are denied jobs because they have not been previously formally employed. Higher education provides updates skills and knowledge in any selected field which equip graduates to join and effectively contribute to the workforce without the need of extensive training.
- Member states should request their institutions of higher education to keep preparing their students with the updated skills and abilities necessary to be valuable employees and enter the workforce immediately upon graduation.

We believe that Member States of the United Nations should demonstrate leadership to ensure the implementation of the suggestions that International Federation for Peace and Sustainable Development is submitting to the commission for the achievement and realization of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

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Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Zonta International, a global organization pledged to empower women through service and advocacy, with the support of the undersigned organizations, presents to the participants of the 63rd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women the following statement for consideration of the Commission in its deliberations on social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Worldwide, almost 650 million women alive today were married before their 18th birthdays; and, each year, another 12 million girls are married before the age of 18. Experts estimate that if there is no reduction in child marriage, the global number of women married as children will reach 1.2 billion by 2050.

Poverty, gender inequality, traditional social norms, customary and religious laws that condone child, early or forced marriage, inadequate legislative frameworks, lack of education and the state of a country's civil registration system are all drivers of child, early and forced marriage.

The consequences of child, early and forced marriage for girls are devastating. It robs girls of their childhoods, education and social interactions with their peers, pushing girls into an early reproductive role and exacerbating the problem of rapid population growth with harmful consequences for them, their children, household, community and society. Child brides are more likely to become victims of domestic violence and to contract HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases. Forced to become sexually active and pregnant before their bodies have fully matured, child brides are also more likely to suffer devastating injuries like obstetric fistula or die due to complications during childbirth.

Child, early and forced marriage is a gross violation of human rights, but it is also a sustainable development issue. While Target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals is critical to galvanizing support for actions to reduce child marriage globally, the Sustainable Development Goals related to poverty, health, education, nutrition, food security, economic growth and reduction of inequality will also not be achieved unless significant progress is made on reducing child marriage.

While child, early and forced marriage is a global issue that can be found in cultures, religions, ethnicities and countries around the world, the drivers of child, early and forced marriage vary by country. Any strategies to address child marriage, therefore, need to be tailored to a local context and to the specific needs of girls at risk and of girls already married. It will require the concerted effort of governments, civil society, families and young people working together to prevent girls from marrying too young and to support those already married as girls.

From 2018 to 2020, Zonta International is investing 2 million USD in the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, in addition to 2 million USD to two other international projects in cooperation with UN agencies and 1 million USD for Zonta's own educational scholarships and awards for women and girls. The focus of Zonta's global and local service and advocacy work is on achievement of Goal No. 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls with a specific focus on eliminating child marriage.

Zonta International calls on the United Nations and its Member States to find effective short-term and long-term methods to eliminate child, early and forced marriage and empower all women and girls. Strategies to address child, early and forced marriage should:

- Recognize adolescent girls as active participants and not passive recipients in efforts to end child, early and forced marriage and empower girls at risk of marriage and those girls who have already married to understand and exercise their rights.

- Programs like the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage engage adolescent girls through targeted programs, including life skills, health information, economic empowerment and social protection.

- Strengthen health, education, child protection and social protection systems to improve services for adolescent girls.

  - Health care providers need training, so they can be more responsive to the specific healthcare needs of girls, including married girls. Social protection systems need to be better integrated and prepared to respond to abuse, exploitation and violence against adolescent girls and to identify and respond to cases of child marriage and those adolescent girls at risk of child marriage.

- Ensure access to quality education at all levels, improve retention rates, support interventions that encourage girls to enrol in school and make the transition from primary to secondary school, and address the unique needs of young married girls to allow them to return to school and complete their education.

  - Lack of secondary schools in many rural areas means girls often live very far from the nearest school. Girls need to be able to travel safely to and from school, and school facilities must include sex-segregated toilets and washing facilities, complying with SDG targets 4.A and 6.2, so girls do not miss school once they begin menstruating. Married girls need to be allowed and encouraged to return to school and should be supported with catch-up classes and childcare services if needed.

  - In Madagascar, UNICEF's Let Us Learn program, funded by Zonta International, is using conditional cash transfers, medical, legal and social support and other social protection strategies to ensure that families and communities protect girls from early marriage and keep them in school, while at the same time encouraging adolescent girls who have married and had children to return to school to continue their education through the provision of catch up classes and child care services.

- Provide out of school girls with alternative learning opportunities and income generation.

  - In Sierra Leone, one of the 12 countries of the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, more than 12,000 adolescent girls strengthened their leadership and decision-making skills and economic empowerment through life skills training; and, in Zambia, a national multisectoral action plan is providing vocational training and employment opportunities for adolescent girls.

All girls should enjoy equal rights and be able to realize their full potential. They should know their rights and be empowered to decide if, when and who to marry. Governments, civil society organizations, local civil and religious leaders and families must work together to ensure adolescent girls have access to the necessary social systems, public services and infrastructure to empower them to say no to child, early and forced marriage, complete their education and realize their full potential. These actions will have positive consequences for the well-being of adolescent girls, their future children, the communities in which they live and sustainable development overall.

This statement is supported by: Graduate Women International (GWI)

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Addressing the priority theme of the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) without tackling gender as a product of a system of power dynamics — namely Patriarchy — will inevitably end in failure.

The entirety of regulation, governance, economic policies, military structures, religion and cultural mores more broadly, are designed to protect a system which is inherently discriminatory on multiple grounds, and which is very specifically gendered.

In order to achieve the sought after "empowerment" of women and girls, a fundamental re-calibration of the way in which we make choices and act on the choices made, is required. From how we define security to how we realise human rights obligations (in particular relating to economic, social and cultural rights) to how we address inequalities between people and between nations, protect the environment and decide on resource allocation, all must be done on the basis of a recognition that the current system is unsustainable and that we have to commit to re-framing our priorities and approaches.

Two deadly pillars sustain Patriarchy and the current power imbalance: militarism and neo-liberalism. At present we invest more than 1.6 trillion per annum in weapons. A figure likely to increase with the renewed appetite for nuclear warheads by the United States, China and Russia, despit the majority of States supporting a nuclear ban. This choice dwarfs global health ($37.6 billion) and education ($6.8 billion) spending. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could be fulfilled if we chose differently, and if the SDGs were achieved, we would have no need for the militarised security.

But Militarism is not just about weapons. Militarism is a way of thought: it is how we define security, masculinity and what it demands of women in return. It requires a masculinity which conflates honour and status with the ability to use violence on behalf of those whose interests are vested in the system. Its impact on gender relations is destructive. It is a system used to organise our communities through ever better-armed police and private security companies, addressing the consequences of inequalities and not the causes. It is yet another choice.

The second pillar is neo-liberalism: as a result of which, people around the world are being impoverished, disenfranchised and disempowered. Massive cuts in public spending, privatisation of public services and of our natural resources are putting constraints on our lives, on our dignity, on our solidarity, on our equality as well as on our environmental sustainability.

Neo-liberalism, is merely an economic model. It has become obvious that its extreme application is creating great inequalities and insecurities throughout the world. Neo-liberal flagship policies — "structural adjustment", "fiscal consolidation" — range from cutting social protection, decreasing investments in public services, including, health, education, pensions, social welfare to flexibilisation of labour laws, deregulation of the market, privatisation of public resources and services. These force drastic reduction in government spending on economic, social and cultural rights with a hugely disproportionate effect on women.

The assertion that we have to choose between functional and healthy economies or social, economic and cultural rights of the people is palpably false. We must challenge the assumption that economic growth is the only measure of social progress and possible only through minimal state and public intervention. Neo-liberalism builds and feeds off inequalities. Women and girls empowerment is simply impossible within this economic doctrine.

The Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights has recently issued a report on the impact of economic reforms and austerity measures on women's human rights. He describes the current economic system, within countries and between them, as inherently flawed with gender discrimination and asymmetric power relations between women and men. He criticised the role of the international financial institutions which, through their lending programmes, surveillance and technical assistance, prescribe macroeconomic policies that have implications for gender equality.

He is not alone. The Concluding Observations of the sixth periodic report of Germany of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has called out Germany as State member of international financial institutions for not having sufficiently exercised its great leverage to ensure that the borrowing states do not violate their obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Examples are legion: In Ukraine, in accordance with requirements imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 165,000 civil service jobs were cut during 2014–2015. Women comprise more than 75 per cent of the civil service, predominately in non-managerial positions, and therefore have been disproportionately impacted — and will continue to be — by these cuts.

The privatisation of the healthcare, in parallel with deterioration of the infrastructure and manpower within the public healthcare sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, have left many Bosnians without access to adequate and proper healthcare. This negative development is forcing women to absorb the deficiency in health services through labour in the household and care economy, further constraining women's formal labour market participation, and subsequently their economic independence.

Feminist economists and activists have taken the lead in calling out the responsibility of international financial institutions for the adverse impact the conditionalities attached to loans have, not just on economic, social and cultural rights but also on the sustainability of the peace itself. Neo-liberal policies many times introduced as a direct result of the IFI conditionalities are adding additional strains on countries recovering from militarised violence and wars, causing new, or feeding into old, grievances over ownership, control and distribution of resources.

Failure to secure basic rights through the provision of public services — education, health care, real employment and social welfare — prevents women's ability to participate as equal citizens in public space. If there is no conscious investment in gender equality as part of the overall economic investments, the burden of picking up the slack of the state will not only fall on women, but women will also most likely remain trapped, balancing between the informal economy (as a means of survival) and unpaid care work.

It is within this neo-liberal framework the global community is also trying to create the concept of empowerment of women. This does not question the structures within which we want to empower women, a structure that is highly patriarchal and entirely built on masculine premises. The co-option of some women into such a system will change very little and empower very few.

Instead, if we choose real empowerment of women and girls, we are better advised to address the political economy of violence against women, which is identified as a greater indicator of national predilection for conflict than Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or levels of democracy.

Again, there are choices: we could choose to invest in education, an education that teaches peace as honourable, rather than war, that rejects our binary notions of gender and the power differentials. We could choose to invest in alleviating poverty, to close tax havens (where some 30 trillion dollars sit idly by), to move money from arms into human rights in particular social and economic rights ... the list of things that we could choose to do is self-evident. We lack only the political will and a belief in the possibility to do so.

So, in this Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom calls on Member States to recall the promises made in the Charter of the United Nations, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in all human rights treaties subsequent. To realise equality and uphold human rights through national investment in public services, through development and investment policies that reflect environmentally sustainable and inclusive economies, eschewing the neo-liberal agenda.

We cannot have both militarism, neo-liberalism and also realise sustainable development, peace and gender equality. We have a choice, and we need to make the right one!

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Statement submitted by Women Deliver, Inc., a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Girls and women are central to sustainable development in all domains — and investments in girls and women power progress for all. Still, they remain disproportionately impacted by systems, services, and infrastructure that fail to recognize and respond to their diverse needs and realities.

As the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women begins its work, it is critical that governments acknowledge all of the factors that drive inequities in girls' and women's access to social protection systems, public services, and sustainable infrastructure, and commit to rebuilding systems to reflect the lived realities of girls and women. This means not only focusing on high-profile, widely-accepted solutions, but also committing to action on deeply entrenched norms, behaviours, and structures that continue to drive inequalities and imbalances.

Social protection systems, access to public services, and sustainable infrastructure are key to ensuring that we Leave No One Behind on the road to 2030. In its World Social Protection report in 2015, the International Labour Organization (ILO) found a strong correlation between a country's social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP and the percent of its population that is able to rise above poverty levels. However, this same report finds that almost three quarters of the world's population lacks access to such schemes. Women are more likely than men to live in poverty; the recent UN-Women Report "Turning Promises to Action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" cites that 330 million women and girls live on less than US$1.90, compared to 325 million men and boys. Youth also disproportionately bear the burden of poverty; according to UNFPA, more than 500 million youth globally live in poverty, many lacking access to even basic services. As extreme poverty disproportionately affects youth and women, the absence of — or the inaccessibility — to social safety nets and public services hits them hardest.

States must commit to addressing systemic imbalances that hold girls and women back from reaching their full potential, thereby constraining progress for all.

Unpaid care is one example. According to a 2018 ILO report, women perform 76.2 percent of the total amount of unpaid care work, 3.2 times more time than men. These data reflect the entrenched beliefs that women are caregivers, and their roles and value to society are primarily in the home. Data from 64 countries show that 16.4 billion hours are spent in unpaid care work every day — equivalent to 2.0 billion people working 8 hours per day with no remuneration. If these services were valued on the basis of an hourly minimum wage, they would amount to 9 percent of global GDP, or US$11 trillion.

These statistics show the huge time and financial cost of girls' and women's unpaid care work. As a result, women have less time to engage in paid labour, or they must work longer hours, combining paid and unpaid labour to support their families. Girls' and women's unpaid work subsidizes the cost of care that helps sustain families, and often fills in for limited or lacking social services — particularly child or elder care. Child care and elder care responsibilities are two big drivers of the global wage gap, which becomes pronounced between ages 25 to 34. Unpaid care constricts women's ability to participate in formal sector employment and can limit them from receiving social protections or services that are tied to paid labour. This is starkly demonstrated in the global pension gap. UN-Women's Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016 Report finds that in most countries round the world women are less likely to receive a pension than are men, and when they do they receive fewer benefits, resulting in a gender pension gap that the World Economic Forum estimates at 30 to 40 percent. Women tend to live longer than men do, and to have higher health

costs as they age, rendering this gap all the more precarious. These disparities disenfranchise women economically and serve to reinforce power imbalances tied to dependence on benefits attached to men's work outside of the home.

Acknowledging and addressing the disproportionate burden of unpaid care not only benefits girls and women but also entire societies. In 2017, the United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment reported that investments in the care sector equivalent to just 2 per cent of a country's GDP could increase employment rates by 4 to 7 percentage points, with women filling the majority of these newly-created jobs.

In order to power progress for all, states must examine their other social protection policies and regulations that constrain girls and women from full participation in society and full enjoyment of their human rights. For example, the 2018 Women, Business, and the Law report found that 104 countries have at least one law impeding women's economic engagement. The same report found that 59 countries globally do not have laws protecting women from sexual harassment in the workplace. These barriers to economic equality are exacerbated by poor social services and infrastructure, such as limited or insecure access, control, or ownership of vital assets, such as land, housing, financial services, capital, agricultural inputs, and transportation.

These examples have real implications for the theme of this year's Commission on the Status of Women, and point us in the direction of change. In order to achieve gender equality, and provide to girls and women the services that they need and deserve, we must fundamentally rework the structure and design of social protection systems, public services, and sustainable infrastructure to be inclusive — in the fullest sense of the word. At Women Deliver, we know that we cannot achieve this by focusing on the few most visible areas that touch women's lives. For real and lasting progress, we need to recognize and address all of them — especially those that are the hardest to acknowledge and hardest to change.

This means addressing labour market inefficiencies driven by women's unequal burden of unpaid care work, and committing to gender-responsive social protection systems that recognize and respond to the unequal burden of unpaid care and the intrinsic economic cost of this work.

It means recognizing the burden of unpaid care by including measures in national statistics, which can illustrate the extent to which different groups contribute to unpaid labour. It means remunerating and reducing the unpaid care burden by providing universal access to affordable child and elder care, and by investing in other sustainable infrastructure that adequately responds to energy and water, sanitation, and hygiene needs. It means redistributing this burden by redoubling efforts to promote and support a gender balance in parental leave policies, including incentive measures to encourage equality between maternal and paternity leave, and tackling social norms that stereotype women into undervalued or uncompensated work. It also means that states do more to support child care and elder care programs.

It means enabling partnerships; governments, donors, multilateral organizations, civil society, and the private sector, collectively have a role to play in removing barriers, challenging norms, and creating context-specific policies and interventions to guarantee gender-responsive social protection systems, access to public services, and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and genuine empowerment.

This may seem like a big task, but we have the resources and the know-how. What we need is the political will and the partnerships to move from rhetoric to action. We need more mechanisms for meaningful engagement with girls and women, more resources devoted to marginalized groups, and more sex and age disaggregated data

to inform the design of systems and infrastructure so that they are truly gender-responsive. This means including the voices of the girls and women in system, service, and infrastructure design and implementation, along with the voices of other sectors, including civil society, the private sector, and academia.

As states convene throughout this session of the Commission, we call on them to rise to this challenge and commit to concrete, time-bound, and tangible goals to reshape social protection systems, public services, and sustainable infrastructure to best recognize and respond to the needs and realities of girls and women. We look forward to action-oriented discussion and solutions for girls and women this week, and up to and beyond our Women Deliver Conference in Vancouver in June 2019. "Together, we can move beyond promises and rhetorical commitments and into action for girls and women, and for everyone."

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Statement submitted by Universal Peace Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Social protection of girls and women from discrimination, physical and sexual abuse and the elimination of barriers to opportunity are critical for their empowerment. United Nations and government policies and initiatives on all levels are important for assuring our progress. This statement is written to highlight a natural social protection with the longest and most sustainable effect on female empowerment that is rarely mentioned in discussions or strategies — perhaps because this source develops from early childhood. This unique and foundational resource, clearly shown to contribute to the optimal development and flourishing of every girl is her loving, involved, responsible father.

The International Conference for Population and Development, 4.27, recognized the importance of fatherhood and called for promoting men's active involvement and shared responsibility in their children's education and health from the earliest stage in his child's life. Males sharing responsibility for the care and education of children model gender equality in the home. Engaged fathers are more likely to seek and encourage equal educational opportunities for both sons and daughters.

Around the world, we have witnessed a serious breakdown of the family. This has led to the decrease in fathers' involvement and solo-mothers taking on the full responsibilities of raising her children. The number of single mothers is increasing around the world. According to the United Nations Population Fund Annual Report 2018, 60 per cent of mothers in the European Union are not married. Unmarried cohabiting couples can be great parents; however, the breakup rate for cohabiters is close to twice as much as a married couple. This typically leaves the mother parenting alone and the children experiencing emotional upheaval. Single mothers deserve praise and support for the unconditional love, tireless effort, and loving sacrifices they make for their children. Many are successful. However, single mothers are the first to say raising children alone is very difficult. Should we just accept this and leave women bearing an unequal brunt of parental responsibility and children experiencing family disruption? Clearly, we need to give more effort towards creating family stability and equal responsibility of mothers and fathers.

Reflecting this concern for single-parent families, research consistently indicates that fatherless boys and girls experience increased risk of emotional, social, and behavioural problems and poorer academic achievement. Any one of these present barriers to a child's success, especially the most disadvantaged in underdeveloped areas. The data indicate that fatherless daughters are at particular risk for depression, diminishing a girl's self-confidence to face the challenges of career and life. Furthermore, girls raised without loving, engaged fathers are more likely to experience earlier sexual debut and suffer sexual and physical abuse by boys and men. The emotional trauma resulting can be long enduring. In addition, these risks lead to STDs, HIV/AIDS, and early and unwanted pregnancy–obviously all of which are severe barriers to girl's life goals.

Studies show that when girls have a secure and loving relationship with their father they have more self-confidence and higher expectations of respectful treatment from other males as compared to fatheriess girls. Well-fathered girls statistically make better choices for respectful partners and healthy, committed relationships than girls not experiencing a loving father. This secure sense of self, nurtured in a father's cherishing, can protect and uplift a woman in every aspect throughout her life.

Can government or social agencies offer such a fundamental protection and secure launching into the world? Clearly, not. It is more the case that governments and social agencies have to expend an enormous amount of money and effort to make

up for the disadvantages many fatherless girls bear. Despite the well-meaning determination of government and social agencies, how effective are these late substitutions? As stated above, mothers are essential and single mothers do heroic jobs, and yet, there is no replacement for the unique foundation a caring father can give to his daughter.

Of course, not all fathers are responsible or protective. Biological fathers can be horribly abusive. Girls should not remain in harmful relationships with fathers or father figures who are unwilling to seek professional help. Sadly, for some it is almost impossible to leave and this needs addressing. However, prevention of fragile family formation and abuse also must receive attention. Studies indicate that girls are at greatest risk for physical and sexual abuse with romantic partners of their mother, much more than with the biological father who is in a committed relationship with the mother. A stable mother-father relationship offers a unique social protection for their children as, according to some studies, the marital commitment increases the investment into and stability of the parenting relationship, especially for men. There is truth in the saying that the greatest gift a father can give to his children is a loving, committed relationship with the mother.

The toll of single parenting is heavy for women. Single motherhood increases vulnerabilities and removes some social protections. Single mothers suffer at a greater rate from depression, health problems, and poverty, and experience less educational advancement. Studies show that unmarried women also are at higher risk for domestic violence. Women should never stay in abusive relationships; that should be without saying, and some relationships or marriages are better to end. However, educational programs have shown that couples experiencing typical couple discord can learn how to handle conflict constructively and safely and become happier and more stable. It is understandable that couples end in divorce when they have not learned basic communication skills and conflict management. These are teachable skills, which improve relationships and the well-being of all family members.

Evidence shows that engaged and responsible fathers actually provide unique social protection and empowerment to mothers. Mothers supported by a stable marriage are more likely to follow their dreams whether it be receiving education, entering the workforce, pursuing a career, and/or having more time to care for young children or elderly relatives.

In conclusion, Universal Peace Federation would encourage exploring proactive measures and family-oriented policies for enhancing the unique empowerment and protection that conscientious fathers can provide. Many countries have initiated policies to increase birthrates, but the cohesion of the relationship between the mother and father must receive attention too. Policies and educational and cultural programs should be evaluated by their strengthening or weakening fathers' roles and responsibilities. The sustainable achievement of female flourishing will not be accomplished without men taking up their portion of responsibility. The role of the father offers a wellspring for the optimal development of girls and full engagement of women in the world.

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Statement submitted by Women's Intercultural Network, a non-governmental organization in consultative with the Economic and Social Council*

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Please recycle

Statement

The Women's Intercultural Network, along with our partners, applaud the Commission on the Status of Women for giving us an opportunity at the sixty-third session to address social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Women's Intercultural Network's mission is to ensure that all women and girls are represented and have a voice in their government, economy, and civil society. It is also critical that their voices be heard during the sixty-third annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women in regard to the priority theme and sustainable development review theme. It has increasingly come to our attention that women's progress is being halted by cutting funds to essential services on which women and girls rely and the legitimacy of protection systems is being undermined by far-right populist discourse.

In July 2018, The Human Rights Council published a report on extreme poverty and human rights in the United States of America. The report paints rather a grim picture of the state of social protections and social services in the United States. It touches on areas such as gendered nature of poverty, racism, disability and demonization of poverty or healthcare. Looking at gendered inequality, the United Nations Special Rapporteur highlights the increasing number of children living in poverty with single mothers, which has risen "from fewer than 100,000 in 1995 to 895,000 in 2011 and 704,000 in 2012." According to the report "children [were] comprising 32.6 per cent of all people in poverty [in 2016]". Moreover, a majority of the poor live in rural areas with limited access to healthcare causing "African-American maternal mortality rates [to] almost double" in recent years. Institutionalized racism and disability further limits individuals in their potential to rise out of poverty. In closing, the report warns against fraud rhetoric on abusive behavior of individuals who want to take advantage of social benefits while they could be working and argues against cutting essential social programs.

Thus, Women's Intercultural Network expresses a deep disapproval with the recent United States budget proposal for 2019 and welfare reform aiming at many anti-poverty programs, health care benefits, education and social security with significant funding cuts while defence spending will see a budget boost. With lower funding for income security programs and social service block grants, the safety net for handicapped, families and low income will further impair their path to self-sufficiency. In a country that is already struggling with deep poverty on one hand and the highest income disparity in the world on the other, such severe cuts to the anti-poverty programs will further disproportionately affect women, especially single mothers, and children who rely on these social programs. In accordance, health care cuts will further inflict harm on low income and new mothers due to the lack of preventative care affordability. Although economic recovery is well behind us and today reports in the media portray a picture of an economic prosperity, austerity measures previously implemented have never been fully reversed and today's far right neoliberal rhetoric contributes to the justification of even deeper carving out of the social safety net.

As a non-governmental organization operating globally to ensure the equal access of women and girls to fair and unbiased social protection systems, Women's Intercultural Network recommends the following to ensure all related goals to the priority theme are considered, including the Sustainable Development Goals. In the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women 60 (number 8), the Commission identified the persistence of the feminization of poverty and emphasized that "the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development." The need to

ensure an adequate standard of living for women and girls throughout the life cycle, including through social protection systems is central to ensuring their success.

The Commission suggested governments undertake all appropriate measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and poverty work by prioritizing social protection policies, including accessible and affordable quality social services, and care services for children, persons with disabilities, older persons, persons living with HIV and AIDS and all others in need of care, and promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men. How will we achieve these measures?

Since non-governmental organizations are a critical link for civil society to connect women and girls with social protection services, Women's Intercultural Network first recommends that non-governmental organizations supporting all civil services by way of care work, family planning, elderly care, and community healthcare should tailor their research and program offerings to ensure optimal partnership with state led public services that often fail to fully assist those in need, especially women and girls when there are gender biases present in society. Non-governmental organizations are the critical link to fill in the gaps where state run agencies often fail to assist.

Our second recommendation is to begin at the root cause of the reason women and girls lack access to fundamental social services - inequality. Non-governmental organizations operating in civil society should ensure part of their programs and offerings offer women some degree to political participation where they are in the position to affect policy and change laws in place that are not ensuring their equal access. In 2018, the state of California passed Senate Bill 826 requiring that publicly held companies have one woman on their boards of directors by the end of 2019. From there, women's representation will have to increase. By the end of July 2021, companies have to have at least two women on boards of five members and at least three women on boards with six or more. While the law's fate with our current federal administration is uncertain, it is proof that elevating women to influence policy will help guarantee equal representation. In order to ensure access to public services and social protection systems, non-governmental organizations will need to bridge the gaps between state-run government social services and often unaffordable private sector offerings. The policy mechanism for this that non-governmental organizations have on hand that is effective globally regardless of religion, legalities, and cultural inclinations is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Women's Intercultural Network is actively collaborating with partners throughout the US to implement and uphold the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) through our Cities for CEDAW campaign. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is a pillar document on which the United Nations member states can build equal access communities and utilize as guidelines for offering social services to women and girls, especially in the public sphere. Through Women's Intercultural Network's Cities for CEDAW campaign we are raising awareness throughout the country that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women strengthens the Sustainable Development Goals aimed at ensuring the equality of women and girls at a local level and provides a mechanism for local governments to implement Sustainable Development Goals targeted at women and girls' equality and empowerment.

In conclusion, social protection systems require full funding and structural reassembling in order to ensure women and girls' equal and fair access to public services. Local governments in partnership with non-governmental organizations can build a sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by re-tooling their public services delivery and funding prioritization in accordance with the guidelines established by the Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Women's Intercultural Network encourages non-governmental organizations and the public sector to apply the gender-focused evaluation, practices and metrics outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to implement these globally accepted guidelines at a local level.

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Statement submitted by Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Social Protection Systems, Public Services And Sustainable Infrastructure For Gender Equality

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University unreservedly endorses the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. It is acknowledged that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affirms the crucial importance of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls as both a prioritised goal as well as a key ingredient of success across the Agenda in its entirety.

Report of the United Nations General Assembly on Trafficking In Persons, Especially Women and Children calls for the development, enforcement and strengthening of effective measures to combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking in women and girls. The Assembly called upon Governments to, amongst other aims, also address the factors that increase the vulnerability of women and girls to being trafficked and strengthen prevention and awareness-raising action. This is also deemed to be relevant for other forms of violation against women, example rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment and female genital mutilation.

It is necessary to highlight that the report of the United Nations General Assembly on Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls postulates that all forms of sexual violence against women and girls, including rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment, are rooted in male domination, entitlement, power and control. They all involve actions which deny a person's dignity. Regardless of the context in which these violations occur, be it within the home, community or workplace, they are directly or indirectly used to maintain and reinforce patriarchal norms, roles and structures and an unequal power relationship between women and men.

Social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure are deemed to be integral elements of the 2030 Agenda and critical for achieving gender equality and sustainable development across all 17 Goals. These three aspects are highly complementary, and it would be most optimal if they worked in parallel in addressing the multiple dimensions of gender inequality and consequent poverty that many women and girls are facing.

Whilst social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure have the valid potential to narrow the gap of gender inequality and consequent poverty for women and girls across the globe, it is acknowledged that the world is still at a considerable distance away from the realisation of these facilities on a global scale.

In giving consideration to the inner dynamics of how gender inequality transpired, it can be seen that an individual's identity insidiously became limited by the external factors associated with the physical body, and gender being one of the most influencing factors that profile the limitation in identity. From birth, a child is given a name and adopts a gender. Both are reinforced regularly by family and society and these can be seen as the early trappings of body-consciousness. Thus, a child finds identity in its name and form. An identity that is already external to the true inner self. This limited external identity, largely based on gender is one that begins to separate and discriminate. Children are confronted by apparent differences relatively early in life and this is where the attitudes and identity of the family unit, parents and culture play a significant part in moulding personal identity.

As the identity becomes progressively externalized, its well-being requires conducive circumstances and relationships to perpetuate this identity. As a result, negative attributes often emerge. Arrogance is born that one can maintain control over an external world of circumstances and relationships, Greed emerges, for fulfilment through wealth, status or food. Attachment offers an illusion of comfort, through possessiveness over people or objects. Lust develops for self-gratification or to satisfy strong and excessive desires. And so it can be understood how the inner dynamics of how gender inequality and consequent violation against women and girls occurs/ed.

All measures to combat and eliminate all forms of violation against women and girls ultimately target each women and girl child, soul by soul. If we wish to address the factors that affect the vulnerability of women and girls and strengthen prevention and awareness-raising action, then the question arises as to what will promote the efficacy of any project or programme.

In dissecting the existing strategies and initiatives to attain sustainable gender equality, a review revealed that while on a governmental and societal level, attempts are being made to narrow the gap of gender inequality and consequent poverty for women and girls through external and practical initiatives, there appears to be a paucity and still remains an opportunity for organisations to make a difference on an individual and small group level. The aim would be to deliver a cutting-edge programme that strikes deep into the essential core solution to the aforementioned challenges that women and girls by addressing the root of the problem.

There are innumerable empowerment/ development programmes that already exist in, which are largely based on practical skills development or life skills development however interventions to address the aforementioned root causative factor requires a spiritual and values based injection. The Brahma Kumaris choose to focus on the personal, intrinsic factors that promote sustainable development in women and girls which is pride in gender identity, internal locus of control, sense of autonomy, emotional intelligence and ability to self-regulate.

It is time that spirituality and values is given its rightful place as a formidable mechanism to drive personal change and a necessary first step in preparing women to relentlessly advocate for and access all other social protection systems, public services and infrastructures for gender equality. This is how women can be empowered to 'do it for themselves'. If we truly want to achieve full participation by and access for women, then exploration about skill building, finance and project implementation cannot be the only conversations we have. Henceforth, it would be more effective and sustainable to include personal empowerment through spirituality and values. This is the missing link. This will naturally foster self-respect and the courage to claim a share of power.

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University unequivocally supports gender equality and is especially committed to the realization of the potential of girls and women. We understand that it is the right of girls and women to be educated and to explore, experience and express their potential to the fullest extent. To illustrate the practical manifestation of the value given to women, it is acknowledged that the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University is the world's largest spiritual organization led by women.

The same supportive stance can be applied to men and, who are often deemed to be the 'perpetrators' as well as to leaders who are criticised for not fulfilling the duties entrusted to them by continuing to perpetuate legislation and systems which reinforce gender bias and consequent violation/poverty of women and girls. Men and leaders who come under scrutiny are also individuals whose identities were moulded according to the external factors that traversed most families and cultures from time immemorial. In order to effect permanent change, these individuals need to be

supported to experience themselves and women to be equal in identity and therefore value and capacity. Once again, personal empowerment through spirituality and values is the missing link. This will naturally foster respect and a willingness to share power.

Personal development for social changes: requires the understanding of how the human mind works. Until the human mind is aligned with the intrinsic identity, which is soul based, human choices and consequent behaviour will still be influenced by externa circumstances and relationships. By aligning the mind to a new level of inner identity, we can develop personal capacity by harnessing the 'power' of the mind. Reference to 'power' in this context implies a sense of strong self-determination and the capacity to think, feel and act in accordance with the highest of human principles as expounded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Beginning from the level of mind, it may be a wise alternative to elicit desirable outcomes by promoting conduct that is alignment with our intrinsic nature example pause for peace as opposed to rejecting violence and chiding the mind into stop that violence. There could be untold value in exploring new innovative methods to achieve the behaviour we wish to reinforce, on an individual level as well as societal.

Our deep realization of these spiritual attitudes is a powerful entry point in shifting the approach to achieving gender equality. From working within the traditional constructs of victim/perpetrator and social welfare recipient/social welfare, we move into the elevated framework of creative contribution, empowered participation, and a pro-active community characterized by positive change and transformation from within the core of each of us. This realization and conscious awareness can afford each of us strength and hope, and can be a powerful tool to help overcome the indignities of all forms of violence and consequent poverty. On the basis of Government, societal, family and personal commitment to spirituality and values, the previous lost opportunities and restricted access to social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure, can change and enhanced full participation by women and girls in programmes that will allow for sustainability and true change is envisaged.

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Statement submitted by Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement

Addressing the Current Achievements and Challenges of the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 2030 towards the Fulfilment of Gender Equality and Well-being with Linkages to Social Protection

Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network welcomes this opportunity to address current achievements and challenges of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 2030 as it works towards the fulfilment of gender equality and wellbeing with linkages to social protection for focusing on rural and women with disabilities.

In the light of the theme of the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, attention is being drawn to the connections between social protections systems, gender equality and the wellbeing and the inability of women and girls to overcome persistent inequalities and discrimination in the current society.

Drawing on these concerns, Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network and its national allies will emphasize the following considerations in the panel discussions and plenary sessions:

Poverty associated with Inconsistency in Social Protection Programs

The agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission at its sixty-first session (E/2017/27) set out the steps and measures necessary to overcome persistent inequalities, discrimination and barriers that women face in the current world of work, and action that is needed to ensure that women can take full advantage of the opportunities arising as the changing world of work. Improving national social protection systems is a major task for the government. In Nigeria social protection programs such as National Poverty Eradication Program, Employment Trust Fund, Micro-Credit Scheme and health Insurance Scheme are inconsistent in the implementation process. They lack continuity, are poorly designed, and there is an absence of a clearly defined policy framework with suitable regulations for poverty reduction. Poor implementation of a comprehensive and effective social protection system subjects women and girls to poverty and violence.

Non-domestication of relevant convention and treaties prevents women and girls from exercising their full Potential and fundamental freedom

Gender equality is vital for the attaining of progressive and sustainable economic development and a peaceful environment. Accordingly, given the existence of the human rights treaties, international human rights standards and consensus documents, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government is obliged to ensure the protection of and legal certainty for women by incorporating the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women.

In 2015, the Nigeria government has made some progress through the creation of Violence Against Peoples (Prohibition) Act 2015 (VAPP Bill). This act prohibits all forms of violence in public and private life, and provides maximum protection and remedies for victims and punishment for offenders. But it is implemented only at the federal level and only in three states. Lack of proper domestication of relevant

convention and treaties prevents women and girls from realizing gender equality and the empowerment and have the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms including women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

In consideration of the issues raised, Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network recommends the following:

Current and future social protection programs in Nigeria effectively designed, monitored and funded in order to have impact on women and girls.

There should be provisions of a national legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures to enhance the realizing gender equality.

To make an inclusive progress, civil societies will continue to advocate for proper implementation of gender equality, including promotion and protection of human rights, social justice and equity.